

Syria and the media: “Activists say...”

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

Every time I read a BBC news piece about events in Syria it invariably includes the following phrase (emphasized):

“Troops are shelling intensively parts of the Syrian city of Homs, activists say, a day after the UN General Assembly called for an end to violence.” — ‘Syrian city shelled after UN vote’, BBC News, 17 February 2012

And invariably what the ‘activists’ say is about the Assad regime killing its citizens. So where is the BBC’s much-vaunted ‘objectivity’? Who are these ‘activists’? By what means does the BBC verify these accounts? And since when has unverifiable news stories been the main source of the BBC’s news on Syria?

The Syrian army resumes its bombardment of the restive city of Homs, killing at least 13 people early on Thursday, activists say. — ‘Deadly shelling hits Syrian city’, BBC News 09/02/2012 at 08:29

Is it any wonder confusion reigns amongst progressives, who on the one hand condemn alleged deadly attacks by the Syrian state on its citizens but seem rather mute on the subject of the ‘armed insurrection’. This question is pivotal to the situation: Are the ‘armed insurrections’ a legitimate response to state violence or are they an attempt to overthrow the state that in turn initiated the Syrian state to respond with deadly violence?

“An explosion damages a major oil pipeline in the central Syrian city of Homs, witnesses and activists say, with the government blaming “armed terrorists”. — ‘Blast hits key Syria oil pipeline’, BBC News 15/2/12

Moreover, are such armed attacks supported, funded and armed by outside forces? Because if they are, they constitute the illegal interference into the internal affairs of a sovereign state. Interference that inevitably provokes a response from the state (which is no doubt one of the objectives). A response that with the help of the BBC and its ‘activist’ assistance can then present the Syrian state as “having a licence to kill”.

“Syria’s government has been handed a “licence to kill” by Russia and China, opposition activists say, after the countries blocked a draft UN resolution.” — ‘Syrian veto a ‘licence to kill’’, BBC News 05/02/2012 at 11:07

Anyone who believes that the Empire is at all concerned about the ‘human rights’ of Syrian

citizens and it's this that motivates its desire to 'protect', must have slept through the Empire's decades-long killing spree. It's unfortunate that those of us who are defending the Syrian state's right to its independence are, by virtue of 'guilt by association', accused of defending the Assad regime. What kind of argument is this? What are we talking about here?

It assumes that there is some kind of universal law in operation that treats all countries and individuals equally, under the eyes of this universal law. But patently this is not true. Laws are applied or not, depending on who is doing the applying and who is on the receiving end.

"Activists say Syrian forces have shelled the city of Homs and killed more than 200 people - a claim denied by the government - ahead of a key UN vote." — 'Syria forces in Homs massacre' — BBC News 04/02/2012 at 09:04

The same rubbish came down the propaganda pipeline when the Empire decided it was time to get rid of Gaddafi. But what do those on the left who bought into this R2P nonsense have to say today I wonder? The latest [casualty figures](#) I've read for 'protecting the human rights' of the Libyan people is that at least 30,000 people have been killed, 50,000 more wounded, and some 4,000 are still missing, all the result of NATO's R2P bombs. And these are figures released by the ruling NTC (there are also an estimated 8000 alleged Gaddafi supporters in jail with verified accounts of widespread [torture](#) and summary executions taking place under the NATO-imposed 'democracy'). Is this the kind of price those on the left are willing to see others pay? Obviously they are, they are not on the receiving end.

"Syria's army moves to reassert control in rebellious suburbs of Damascus in the worst fighting around the capital in the 10-month uprising, activists say." — 'Crackdown on rebels in Damascus', BBC News 29/01/2012 at 09:16

If nothing else the media non-coverage of the Syrian disaster-in-the-making reveals the true extent of mainstream media power in shaping the nature of events and thus our response to them. Moreover, it reveals just how simple it is to pull off the stunt, especially when the editors at the BBC can rely on the exactly same mantra echoing around the world; 'activists say...' and blurry images apparently confirm it.

"The Syrian army launches renewed assaults on the restive cities of Homs and Hama, activists say, as the UN prepares to discuss the conflict." — 'Assault on restive Syrian cities', BBC News 27/01/2012 at 14:41

Repeated endlessly, what 'activists say' is the hook on which to hang imperial propaganda. There is not a single BBC story over the past few months that presents a view from the other side such as the one Fiona Hill [reported](#) from Syria recently and these people had names. Virtually all of the BBC's interviews with said activists have had their faces covered, itself setting the scene for how the viewer receives the content.

'What are your so-called Christian leaders in Australia thinking?' shrieked a Christian woman in a candlelit Aleppo home. 'Don't they realise our freedoms in Syria are the envy of other Arab countries - and impossible in Qatar?! If Bashar (Al Assad) goes, we will be lambs to the slaughter.'(ibid)

And this is what amazes me about the Western left; how easy it is for them to be duped. After all, what is it that they want? They, like their NATO/BBC counterparts want to see the Assad regime fall but I assume they want to see a 'democratic' government replace Assad's, or do they want him to stop 'repressing his people'?

What do they want? You see the fallacy of the position surely? It starts with 'what they want' as it's none our business to be telling the Syrian people 'what they want', but once you start on this trajectory you find it's a one-way street. As with Libya, we hear not a peep about the current situation in Libya from those who joined the bandwagon of dissing Gaddafi but decrying NATO at the same time.

"There are also reports that 18 premature babies died after their incubators failed as a result of power cuts. State TV denied the reports and said Homs hospitals were operating normally." — 'Syria: Homs under 'heaviest' shelling yet', BBC News, February 8, 2012

The situation in Syria would appear to be almost [identical](#) to that of Libya (with some Kuwait thrown in for good measure) in the months that ran up to the destruction of the country in just a few, short weeks. It'll probably take NATO a little longer to destroy Syria but the outcome will be the same: a country destroyed, reduced to penury, yet another 'failed state' that can be removed from the Imperial chessboard.

I assume those on the left who are busy calling for 'regime change' (or some kind of change) don't go along with this, but short of capitulating to the Empire's demands, there are only two futures for Syria: in one, the Syrians themselves are left to sort it out or, the Empire bombs the shit out of them.

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